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The Honor of Breath Feather



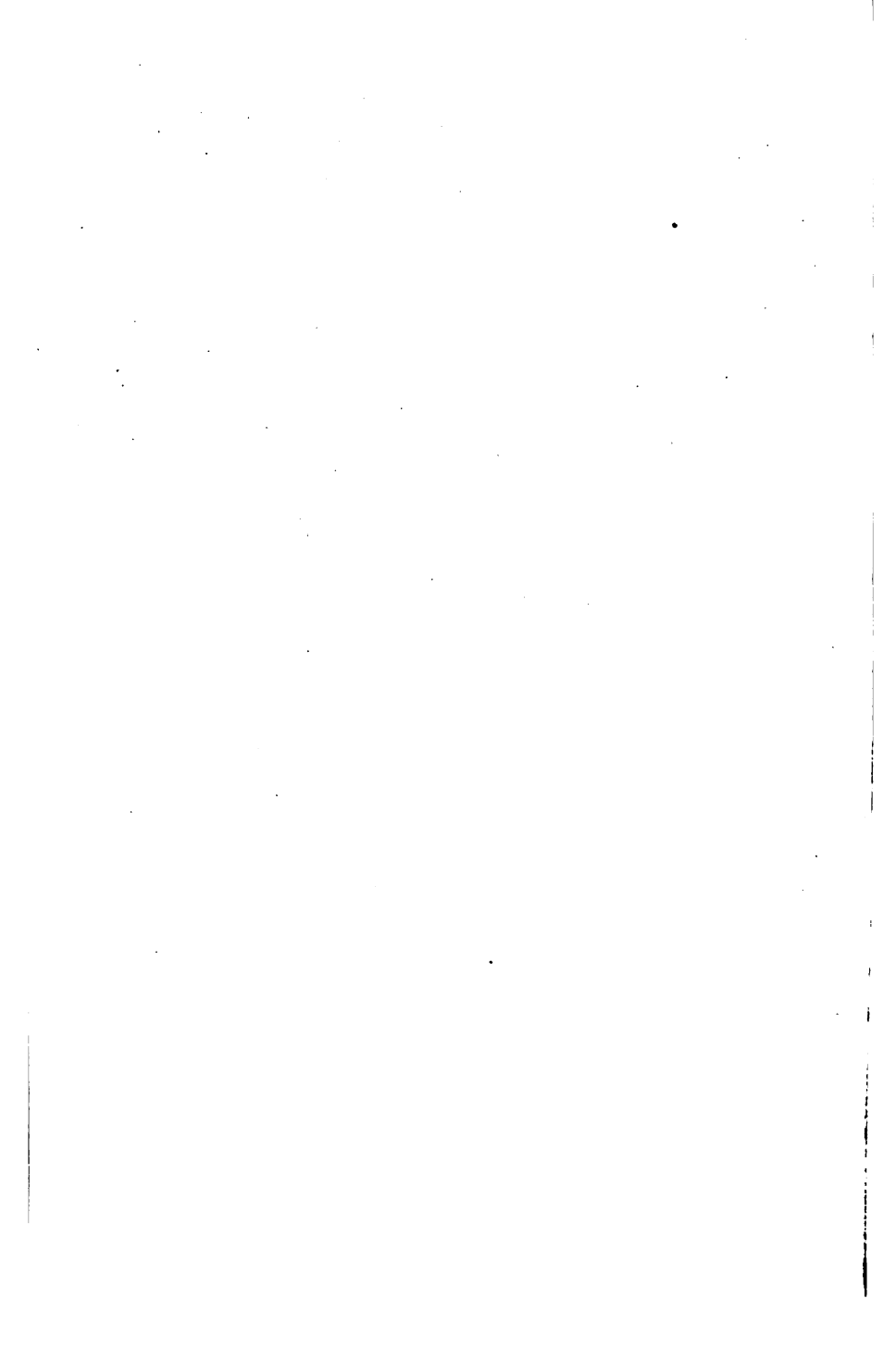
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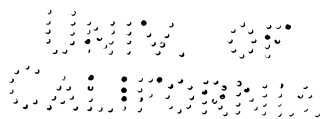
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THE BLOWING OF THE ASHES

THE HONOR OF BREATH FEATHER

BY

ANNA KALFUS

ILLUSTRATIONS BY MAY LESSEY

I. J. DE JARNETTE
2319 HOWE STREET, BERKELEY
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of Powell and Schoolcraft. For The Legend
of Itasca, A Portfolio of Indian Sketches,
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THE HONOR OF BREATH FEATHER

Breath Feather had sorrow, for his sister's son was dead at the worst time for him. Because of the boy Breath Feather was between his enemies, waiting for any sign of action which the breath of fate should blow him.

His sister had wrapped the boy in all his garments. She would not keep one, for he would need it in the land to which he was going. The father had seen her twine his riches around the boy, the riches of his wampum-strings, white beads, the Indian's silver, red beads, his gold, and he had said nothing as she ruined him for life. She had crowded the boy into the pap-poose-basket—he was rather too large for it in all his clothes. In one hand she had put a shell, white and slim like a tusk. She had whispered to the child: "Little one, under the world, by the house where the earth is red, the road forks. Take the fork of the road by the hand that holds the shell and thou shalt get home without thy mother." She had taken the best covering and wrapped it around him, around the peace-look on his face: she had corded the bundle with wild vines, and it was ready for the fire in the trench.

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To these parents everything which had been alive and changed was immortal, with the old needs of earth. They saw their departed hope comfortable and happy because of what he had taken away, and their sorrow was tempered by the joy of their ruin—but Breath Feather!

The boy had been called Little Breath Feather. It was not custom that one should be called for another, for the reason that should either die the living would be left without a name, but the boy had borne Breath Feather's name and it must drop out of speech—people did not speak the name of the dead.

He had died at an important time, when selected youths, clothed in bear skins, were to be sent out to commune with the gods in fasting and purity, with the end in view that these gods, great bears, would send some vision, warning, or sign, to advance them in life or further the interests of the band. To such neophytes come back from holy communion, new names were given and the privilege to kill a man without accounting. Breath Feather, well-spoken-of in youthful activities, had been picked as one of the youths to go before the gods, and he was going in order to get back and kill One Coyote and not pay for him. Always till now his wishes had

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come to him as easily as the feather he had leaped to take from the wind; but his sister's child had left him The Nameless One.

That he should go before the gods without a name was the worst of omens. Fifteen centuries had clothed with peculiar meaning the misfortune which had overtaken him. It was the work of a malignant throng, not men, each of which was stronger than a man. When a child he had snatched a feather from the wind and won his name, and no one had known the name of the bird from which it had fallen. The throng of Fates, in taking the boy, had leaped to snatch his name as he the wind's feather, and no one knew the loss it meant. Because of the boy he waited in strange trouble between his enemies, the moping solitary One Coyote and Old Old White Ashes, among other stolid men in the house. He waited, hating One Coyote because he had tricked him out of Soft Cloud, as Old Old White Ashes waited, hating both because they were young and had played a little with Soft Cloud, and because long joy of life might lie before one of them with the girl even then slipping in late to sit by the Great Great Grandmother and wail among the women.

One Coyote thought much, as thinking went

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in his day. He heard the women's wailing faintly because of his thoughts. His memory, going back to look at doings of The Nameless One, and bounding from one to another of these, showed him that always when The Nameless One had done something, he, One Coyote, had said it could be done; he, the thinker, had made the honor of the doer. Even when they were boys snaring little fishes with the hair of girls, Soft Cloud's had brought his great luck. He told this to his mate and got no more lucky snares—the other had snares and luck—till he had tracked Soft Cloud back for a while. But what had a youth who was just going to seek the gods and begin to be a man? Old Old White Ashes had a great oval-dome of a house thatched with dry tules and stocked with food and comfort. He would be the one who would get Soft Cloud to keep. At another thought, which was also a hope to coil around his heart-core like a quick poison-snake, he felt good cheer, Old Old White Ashes might never have a son to keep him in the recollection of the gods, in which case it would be worse for him than if he had never been born, and one enemy would be struck.

Again, The Nameless One was to have what both had most wished for and talked of, permission to go with youths sent this year to seek the

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bears. He, himself, could go. Any lad of his age could go of custom if he willed to do so; but self-choosing was not like being picked as worthy by the elders of the band—blind elders. The thinker could see something inside him as he could see his body in the waters of the creek, but he had no words to put in a picture for others to see that which was to make a better man than one they had chosen. His heart became heavy again, so heavy that he would have thought it a lump or a stone except that these could have no sore and no hate. He saw plainly that he had made the honor of the man without a name and had defrauded himself.

Now he hated everyone, his enemies, the elders, even Soft Cloud, who had been led from him by a boy's doings and would be beguiled by an old man's good house and comfort. Most of all he hated The Nameless One, who—he had thought it out—meant to get back and kill him. He came not to hear the wailing of the women for thinking of what a good hater should do to control what he hated and to be controlled by neither things nor men. He had become as never before, a thinker, for now it was not love, but hate, which he must contrive to satisfy and life which he must protect.

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Next day, keeping unseen, he padded out after the youths going into the presence of the gods. He tracked The Nameless One to his sanctuary, a shag of ferns and hazel-bush in a hollow of the mountain known as The White Woman, in a land where no white woman had ever stepped. On a shoulder of the hollow were berries; at its mouth was thin still water.

One Coyote crept under the shag to watch.

If The Nameless One should so much as pluck one berry or dip his fingers in the thin water to moisten his lips, he would inform the priest tho he should die for spying on holy youth. The traitor to his vows could have but one name and be but one thing—"Outcast" was the name, out-cast was the thing. If the loss of the name could be made to mean this, another enemy would be struck.

At noon next day The Nameless One was kneeling up in his bear-coat in such daylight as went to the hollow, and reaching up his arms as he had done thru the night. One Coyote's heart-sore was worse. As things were, he believed that The Nameless One would keep his fast. He was very hungry himself. He wished that a woman would wander to the hollow, for never had any

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youth made scandal of the great fast by looking on a woman; but no woman would be wandering from home. At that he had a thought which would deprive Old Old White Ashes of his son, which would disgrace Soft Cloud, which would banish The Nameless One, and which would place his band as low in the sight of old friends and old enemies as he saw himself by neglect. As fast as he might, he went down to the Great Great Grandmother with an invention.

"Great Great Grandmother, I was not sent to the gods—I was nobody—I could only think. I went to my own place, and the gods have made it as holy as any. A she-bear came there to One Coyote and made him her messenger to honor The Nameless One. She will give him the green stone-bear on the sacred bundle for a sign that he will honor the people. A pure woman is to take the green stone to the she-bear. Who is so pure as Soft Cloud?"

"Old Old White Ashes has this morning taken Soft Cloud."

"Old Old White Ashes must give up awhile. Go. Tell him. Get Soft Cloud in the brown she-bear's hide that is against the house-wall, for she must be covered. She must go with you to the medicine-man for the green stone. She must

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go alone with it to the she-bear that is in the middle hollow of the White Woman. The first day she must not speak. Next day she may speak to whatever is there. She must stay till the she-bear sends her home. Tell Old Old White Ashes that the she-bear will see to it that Soft Cloud has a fine son if she can be trusted to do as she is told and to tell no thing that is done. She must do this—tell no thing that is done.”

Great Great Grandmother was highly respected. She had strong medicine, much power, tho she had lost the boy. She went to Soft Cloud.

“Get in the brown she-bear’s hide that is against my house-wall. I will make it right with Old Old White Ashes. Go to the priest for what he will give you. Take it to The White Woman. Go above the middle hollow by the outside. Slip down to the she-bear you will find waiting, and give her the green stone made in her shape. Do not speak today. Tomorrow you may begin to speak. The she-bear will send you home when it is time. If you have not too much mouth she will see to it that you have a fine son.”

Great Great Grandmother hastened to the priest.

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"It has never been so before. A she-bear of the gods has spoken to your sister's son. She says send her green stone shape from the sacred bundle. Your sister's son is to be advanced to honor."

"Who says this to me?"

"One Coyote. He sought his own place. He sought it in his own way. The gods have made his way and his place as holy as any. The she-bear went to One Coyote and sent him to me. My speech is as his speech."

"Who is to take the holy thing?"

"That which is at the door."

Already the messenger was at the door in the brown bear-hide that had hung against the house-wall.

With the holy sign of the green stone Soft Cloud climbed above the middle hollow of the mountain and trembled down to a shape in a bear-coat. She supposed it was the she-bear, for she was timid and dared to look but once, and she drew her bear-robe closer.

The eyes of The Nameless One were closed, his arms stretched before. He brought his palms to the earth as if taking. He lifted them as if offering to the gods all that he had received. Soft Cloud held the green stone where one of

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the descending palms lay upon it. The Nameless One opened his eyes and saw his honor, the sign of the holy ones in his hand, the messenger of the gods before him, a bear—no—a woman folded in tall sweet ferns and low stalks of wind-flowers.

Soft Cloud told her story. She had expected to find a she-bear who had sent One Coyote for her green stone shape. Had the gods sent her to their worshipper? Either this or she was ruined for ruining a man.

The man saw it as ruin under the old order or a boon under a new—and had not the gods, even the Wind, ever given him boons easily? Presumptive of the good will of the gods, presumptive of their happiness, he dared their messenger, for end of the old or beginning of the new, to live out his time of trial as bears live in their hollows.

The last day Soft Cloud rose out of her bear-hide with berries in her hair and berry-stains on her lips, and saw a figure beyond the thin water behind the back of her mate. She thrust out one finger, dark as earth; she said low, "One Coyote."

Her punishment was at hand, the man's sus-

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picion. The Nameless One joined her with One Coyote and the malignant things which had taken his name in taking the boy called after him, and without shame he felt for his strength, broken by half-fasting, and gathering it, he smote the woman in the mouth, in the breast, and below the girdle; and he turned, but One Coyote was not there.

He kneeled to the earth, and sank to drink of the scant fresh water. While he was drinking, One Coyote was running very swiftly from death, very swiftly and very thoughtfully running. When he rose, the water was thinner. He searched till he found a flinging stick: he went hunting with it.

He knew the ways to which a man would keep if he were not hunted, for journeying men must walk in the old paths, and in them were appointed resting-places and places where men's voices must be low and offerings must be made to the devil of the trail.

He reached the end of the trail at the end of the good land. A tree there was the last station where the devil could be honored, but he had brought no offering.

A red spider had taken a trail out of its own body, a ghost-thin trail, and floated it down, and

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come to the end of it to look at him. Its eyes were made of lights. It spread its feet, and, steadied against something unseen, stood perfectly still as it observed him. Later it began to go above, gathering up and taking with it the trail that it might not be followed. It would tell the devil that a man was passing with no offering.

Before it quite vanished The Nameless One laid the flinging-stick at the roots of the devil-tree and dropped off where there were no paths. A cross-country wind puffed at his back tho it was an hour when a sea-wind should have been against him. For his sacrifice of the weapon already the informed devil was helping him on: but had he been slain he would have gone with his hate under the world to the house by the road where the earth is red to wait for One Coyote and keep him from the fork of the road which led home.

He moved so as to keep his man in that part of the tule-marsh which went out and lay down as low as the sea. He was sure that he would find him, tho hid like a shadow and as hard to find, between the devil-tree and the lazy creek which lay against a long spit of rock poked out from the world's edge.

The hunt was slow, hunger overtook him, and,

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waiting in the tules for a sign of a man, he prayed to The Highest Help, the Great Mind which is the Universe, and is above all other gods, to let him think that he had eaten. Waiting for eye or nose or startled wing, he saw down from the tules blown on the breath of evening into huddles in the sea; he watched a huddle of the drift onward bound thru the water toward him, and little waves trying to roll over it, and the sea-drift getting to the top. The drift he took for One Coyote's plot, and the little waves for things One Coyote was doing for it. When the drift moved in the very crest and top-froth of the little waves he looked for a big wave to come over them like the big thing *he* would do. The big wave came and went and there was the huddle of drift, One Coyote's plot, bound toward him. Bigger waves and great water-shapes were coming—let them come—he had the feeling of a laugh inside where he was ruined.

He saw many water-shapes, green and gleaming, rise from the sea. He heard the boom out of their deep mouths when they rushed beside the long spit, and, shouldering each other, went up the creek, very tall and very strong tho their locks were as white as the oldest man's. There was nothing to hold them back, and the world

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there was flat as a floor, but he had no fear for he knew how far they had been used to go.

One Coyote had his fancies where he lay by the edge of the world. He had seen the sea turn up a canoe and toss men as huddles of drift, but he had no fear of the sea so long as it sent up only little waves each one of which seemed tied to the bottom and to move up and down and back and forth thru a space measured by the motion of a tied canoe. Such watery heaps fell into lines which seemed to be long green snakes gone from the grass and playing in the sea. At the land's edge the snakes leaped a little, opened foaming lips, and, striking at rocks on the long spit, harmed nothing. But when black shining fins and mighty shapes of green gleaming water were thrust from the sea, such as in all his life he had not lain near, he had fear as he waited.

He, too, had hunger, and the torment of wicked souls which, in the bodies of pestiferous insects, harbored in the tules. He, too, prayed to the Highest High to take his hunger and let him be satisfied. He prayed to the god to hold back the shapes, and he implored the shapes, in the same agony and silence in which he prayed, to pass him by. He besought the souls to cling

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to him no more. Even in cold marsh-water his desire lingered on life, not comfortable life, mere life, for there is nothing which does not dislike to die.

Unheeding prayer which was soundless the wicked souls bit out his blood, and One Coyote stirred to brush them off.

The Nameless One was glad of the stirring, "as glad as grass of the rain." He started forward, not caring that old tules were crying harshly that he was there. One Coyote broke out of the tules, dripping salt marsh-mud. Shapes from the inexhaustible sea were leaping to meet him. To The Nameless One they appeared unfriendly as the tules, but caring nothing that the tules and the sea were helping his man he cried to the three together the name he had lost, a name of the dead, a wild and terrible cry. He ran out and gripped One Coyote and went mad at the joy of finding the good revenge he sought in his loss. One Coyote, more afraid of the shapes than of the brute gone mad at his throat, struggled no more than the shadow of a beaten man, and the shapes, caring nothing for triumph or defeat, and nothing for prayers in the line of their force, thrust both men from the edge of the world, and, falling apart, followed

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them. Other shapes came from the sea, giants and loud-mouthed. Flapping long arms they passed swiftly along the edge of the world.

As day after day crept backward, and, even as One Coyote and The Nameless One, came not again, Soft Cloud had awe and sorrow. The band saw that she was changed, and when she brought a fine son from the gods to preserve the memory of Old Old White Ashes they gave her respect and honor equalling that shown the Great Great Grandmother.

They never knew of the heart-sore of One Coyote nor of the ruin of The Nameless One, never suspected that devils went out of the swamp and the sea to take them away when their desire of life was the desire of young men. They believed that the youths had been called to use among the gods that portion of the infinite and divine life which had been sent thru them for a few years to a band of men. They praised One Coyote as the messenger of the gods to Soft Cloud, to Old Old White Ashes, and to The Nameless One. They praised The Nameless One by a name greater than he had hoped for, a name which may be rendered no more nearly than "Honor-Man, Our Man."

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Again the thinker had made the honor of the doer—honor, the shifty thing, made by purpose or by its reversal.

The spying of One Coyote turned to wider issues. Because of the signal favor of the gods the band moved from their low lands to higher country, boldly called themselves Bears, and on ceremonial occasions painted their faces to be as faces of bears. Approaching the dignity of a tribe they spake no more the language of others, but men and chiefs coming to talk of affairs used the speech of the two believed to be men whom gods had invited to come and continued to entertain. The thinking of One Coyote made the Golden Age.

THE GREAT BEAR

Seven hunters followed Mukwa,
Great Bear, moving on the shadows
Of the long boughs, in the blue shade
Of the forest, thru the hollows
Of the bushes; followed, creeping
As the bush-vines creep thru bushes.
Seven hunters from their longbows
Ventured arrows after Mukwa—
Never one or three would dare it.

Friends the bear had, one a giant
Going day by day aforest;
Others, stronger, were the Woodwinds,
Tall and long-armed, taking odors
Over to him, taking footfalls.

And the giant tracked the hunters—
Overtook them, beat and broke them—
Four he left to slip the arrow
Forward hungrier for Mukwa.

And the tall and long-armed Woodwinds
Lifted Mukwa, rose, and set him
In the open footpath running
From the spirit's sky-blue wigwam
Over treeless plains of heaven.

THE GREAT BEAR

And the Great Winds, springing, shouting,
Thunder clouds upon their faces,
Moved the forest, shook its thickets;
Found the hiding men, the hunters;
From the hollows in the thickets
Flung them upward thru the full leaves;
Flung them upward thru the tree tops,
Thru the thunder; flung them whirling
'Round and 'round and upward, upward,
To the foot-road straight and level
Thru the clear-fields and the bear-grass
Of the treeless plains of heaven;
Scattered them behind the Great Bear.

Now he sees the hunters follow
On the treeless plains of heaven,
On the flatness and the sameness .
Of the grass-fields of the heaven.

First is one who holds the longbow
And the lean and eager arrow,
After comes the kettle-bearer,
Next the man with flints for firing,
Last the one who gathers faggots.

Never shall the arrow reach him,
Never shall the fire be kindled
'Neath the kettle of the famished:
And he braves them—Mukwa, Star Bear.

THE LEGEND OF THE NORTH STAR

In the land of the Algonquin
Brave and strong-eyed was Ke-ne-u.
Never sick or pained or fearful
Was Ke-ne-u, War-bold Eagle.

When he chose, he chose Memaingwah,
Butterfly, the maid Memaingwah.
He had played with her in childhood.
She had flitted off before him
But he reached her, overtook her—
Swift and strong are wings of eagles,
Wings of butterflies are weaker.

Snatched by foemen from the warpath
He had run the strong man's gauntlet
And they neither killed nor struck him.
Leaping from them he had shamed them.

In the foemen's forest running,
Hiding, creeping, hunted, hated,
Famine-hungry, famine-thirsty,
He had thought of this Memaingwah.
At her doorway asked Ke-ne-u
For the butterfly, Memaingwah.

THE LEGEND OF THE NORTH STAR

He was told that she had left him,
Flown from earth the moon before that,
Flitted now along some lonely
Spirit-trail across the heaven
To some shining bridge the souls cross;
And he answered, "I will find her.
Swift and strong are wings of eagles,
Wings of butterflies are weaker,"
And he leaped into the forest.

Never went he to his people
As the warrior Ke-ne-u.
Once he twinkled back with Firebirds,
With the twinkling Wawwawtaissa;
Went with bands of turning, whirling
Wawwawtaissa, Little Firebirds;
Sparklike perched upon the arrow
Of the father of Memaingwah;
Bright as Firebird sat there singing
With a Firebird's hum and murmur,
With the murmurous hum of fire;—
"I shall go toward the north sky
And the shining bridge of spirits.
Watch and you will see me waiting
At the bridge-end for Memaingwah."

And the people, watching Mukwa,

THE LEGEND OF THE NORTH STAR

Saw a new star come to heaven;
And they offered smoke of peace-pipes
To the star which never vanished,
For they knew it was Ke-ne-u,
Watching for the lost Memaingwah
On the shining bridge of spirits,
Knew the star was their Ke-ne-u,
Keeper of his obligation.

THE SPIRIT CANOE

By the falls of Minnehaha
Thru the pleasant days of summer
Stood the wigwam of Kookloogoo.

In the wigwam worked Ampata,
In the wigwam or its shadow.
When she went too far to view it
'Twas to gather for Kookloogoo
Warpaint, yellow earth and red earth.
And Ampata, working lonely
In the woman's way, grew homely.

But Kooklogoo, free as winds are,
Went far outward on the prairies,
Went to all the fishing waters,
Hunted deer at all the salt-licks,
Ate the small and pleasant pine-nuts,
Ate the melon and the green corn,
Ate the buffalo and bear meat,
Ate the marrow of the great bones;
Grew as brave and strong as two men,
Fierce and fearful on the warpath
Won two feathers for his scalp-lock;
And Two Feathers, strong as two men,

THE SPIRIT CANOE

Took for wife a chieftain's daughter,
And forgot the wife Ampata
In the wigwam in the forest
By the falls of Minnehaha.

First, Ampata, brown and homely,
Counted day-suns, counted night-suns;
Thru the Hot-moon, Corn-moon, Deer-moon,
Moon-of-sturgeon, Moon-of-travel,
Counted, waited for Kookloogoo.

When she knew, she took her children
To the white canoe of birchbark,
Pushed it out upon the river
Running, leaping in the moonlight
Falling down at Minnehaha.

You can see them in the moonlight,
Yonder, nearer, in the moonlight
Gliding down at Minnehaha.

In the white canoe of birchbark
They are shadows, white as spirits,
White as waters and the moonlight
Falling down at Minnehaha.

IN THE HOME WOOD

My mother saw the self-same flow'rs
Which flame the dim beech-wood
When she stole here in vanished hours
Of her childhood,

Saw antlered deer come drinking then
Out of this same brown brook,
And on a band of Indian men
She chanced to look.

From eaves of beeches gaily whirled
Great flocks of paroquets
In colors of the fern uncurled
And violets.

She gathered plumes (from flocks decreased
To one that mateless grieves)
As many as the tints released
By dying leaves.

How many thousand flower-ghosts
With hearts of honey-musk
Move in that beam of shining hosts
Aslant in dusk?

IN THE HOME WOOD

Ghosts — herds of white deer, drinking, stand
Untired, tall, and slim,
Start, fade beyond the long low land
In distance dim.

From dark below the beeches' eaves
And over wine-red mold
That was the bodies of the leaves,
Straight men of old

Go forth among the violets
A file of clouted folk
Who see me not; long calumets
They, sitting, smoke.

They are not men with ruddy blood,
They know not time or tide,
And thru them runs a moon-white flood
And naught beside.

So many things have lived and died!
It seems a destined part
To have and lose—'tis well to hide
Thy ghosts, dear heart.

PRIMROSES AND THE STAR

I'd vainly watched to see stars run
From day in dust of lights
To far-off places nights
Have empty, left behind set sun.

I'd watched hour after length'ning hour
To see a bud unrolled,
Quick-forming out of fold;
When I was gone 'twould be a flow'r.

Too slowly, slowly, came the bloom
For wistful childish eyes,
The stars ran to the skies'
Blue-void too quickly thru the gloom.

I found a thicket that in night
Was hid away and seemed
A quietness that dreamed
And wished no one nor garish light:

A garden thicket, waiting stalks
With blurs of branches tipped
With buds between the lipped
Long trumpet-flowers from wall to walks.

PRIMROSES AND THE STAR

Above, the first of yellow stars
Was in its place in heav'n
In blue that had been giv'n
To it between the moon and Mars.

The one star broke; and thin and fine
It fell as if 'twould fade
In the low thicket's shade
As dark as purple columbine.

But suddenly with flutterings
On ev'ry branch-ed blur
As golden moths, astir
From startling, shake apart their wings,

Outwidening, the starry glows
Shook, and the stalk-tips shone
With lifted-up full-grown
Fair bodies of the great primrose.

Nor mourned the moon nor old red Mars
Their re-embodied lost.
What need? The host they crossed
Was as the sudden pomp of stars.

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IN MAMMOTH CAVE

LITTLE CORN TASSEL'S FIRST SUMMER

Over the length of Green River in the Land of Mammoth Cave was an arch of the brown bodies of trees and of the green and amber shining which leaves are when lifted in light. Under it, over a clear shallow of the river, Little Corn Tassel hung in a queer contrivance which Swan-a-noa, his mother, had made for him.

This contrivance held him closer than the cup holds the acorn, or the bur, the chestnut, for it never once dropped him. It was woven of Willow-twigs, and was laced down the tapering front, from above the boy's waistline to below his toe-bottoms, with a brown deer's sinew. It was looped by a deerhide thong upon a tough bough of a willow which grew half its roots in the shallow. It was hung with its back to the south bank of the river that the boy might not want Swananoa from seeing her and win her from work, duty-work such as curing skins which Tarrho, her brave, brought in from the chase, and dear-work of which you shall know.

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Swananoa might not go to the boy for hours, but leaping fishes went, gudgeons and shiners, and quiet birds, waders and divers; paroquets, too, big-beaked and unquiet, flashing, flaunting fellows, jabbering and jibing in hoarse voices, but their body plumage was greener than jade-stones, greener than baby-leaves born to the young mother, Spring, and their heads were yellower than yellow lilies Green River wore on her breast.

Winds went into the fair stillness as often as birds. They made songs, and one was to the bough:

Bow, Willow-bough,
Dip a boy low;
Aloft-alow
Wave, Willow-bough.

Swing a boy slow
Aloft-alow.
Up, Willow-bough,
Swing, sway, high-O!

Once on a time a foraging squirrel, with a tail like a gray mist-brush, paid a visit to the willow and beheld Corn Tassel. He poked his prying nose at Corn Tassel's left eye. Corn Tassel covered it with the lid which belonged to it. He

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poked his prying nose at Corn Tassel's right eye. Corn Tassel covered that with its own lid, and opened his left eye.

"You're not fit to eat, and you're nothing at all, quite nothing," said squirrel, and, whisking his tail across both the little Indian's eyes, he leaped into a rabble of spark-red stars to vanish.

The boy blinked but he did not cry—he was a young brave.

He may not have seen the early eye looking at him from the far-blue. He may not have seen splendid bronze things which crept out of stalks and leafiness across the river, wild turkeys with scarlet about their heads, or panthers lapping water with scarlet tongues. Certainly he saw sparkles on the water, and flakes of birch-bark curled up like play-canoes, floating past with leaves and blossoms, and hulls of beans and cobs of corn which Swananoa threw to the river. He smelled succotash boiling in the red-clay kettle—the kettle had a scalloped border and a ring of rope-print not far under the border. He smelled steam of meat stewing with its garnish of beans or squashes. He smelled fragrance of cakes roasting on gray flat stones. He heard, hour after hour, sounds of the amulet-maker and sounds of the maker of weapons, who chose to

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work together between the banks of the little run above him when the water was low. He heard the bark of Gogo, their lean yellow dog, who sometimes barked in the face of the Thunder God himself. He heard Tarrho come home in the evening, the slipping of slain deer from Tarrho's shoulders, and the thud of Tarrho falling down to rest. Best of all, he heard Swan-anoa's footsteps, tho never so soon or so often as he wanted. He found but wordless cries to say this as she came close behind him to reach up brown arms and draw him down, or to hold up a drink in a hollow red-clay owl with big, hooped, painted eyes, and a roundish hole in the top of its head. He always drank all that the owl brought. When she unlaced the sinew-cords and rolled him from his wrap in the stiff wicker case where he had lain as straight as an arrow in its sheath, she balanced him upon her palm, and the boy, three months old, stood as straight as a corn-stalk above brown mold, and strong enough to live, the old braves said.

As Corn Tassel hung upon willow-bough in the summer-world, day by day the Sun sought and beat him; mist swathed him and shut out the night's majesty, or rain slipt thru the leaves and pattered upon him and rolled from him and

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plasht in the shallow; and he hung flickering when the God of Lightnings, prowling by Green River, cut the dark with his gleaming hatchet.

One night there was peace by the shallow. The moon was white as snow, and its sparkles on ripples and on floating bark-bits were like frost-work. All the birds were asleep in all their nests on the boughs, and Willow-bough was asleep. Its leaves hung down straight like the boy's wicker case. Only the boy's eyes moved and the slow ripples of the shallow. Then he saw, on the bough to which Squirrel had come, a puff of feathers, the wise bird whose eyes are set in her face and not in the sides of her head. Her eyes were round, and gave light like amber moons, one on each side of her queer, high nose. They shone upon the boy's face, round and tawny like her's. He did not blink.

"Ah *who*, Ah *who*, Ah *who are* you?" she moaned with swelling throat. Wind swayed the bough and the boy then, and Owl, wishing to know something more, turned her wise head to follow the boy with her moony eyes. "Ah *who*, Ah *who*, Ah *who-oo-oo are* you?" she wailed.

Corn Tassel spoke. "Ah *gool*!" said Corn Tassel.

The wise bird did not understand. She started

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back—she started to float. She floated as softly as one feather till she had no bigness whatever in the white glory, and tho she was not to be found she was somewhere.

“Ah goo!” gurgled Corn Tassel till he fell asleep.

Swananoa stooped for a pinch of the wood-ashes under the red kettle, and, from the hollow of her hand, with soft breathing, dusted them over Corn Tassel to keep off elves of Babyland, who know every baby there and go out to punish them when they stray to Indian mothers; and she prayed to the gods of her band, and to the gods of whom Tarrho had told her, to the good ones to remember her beginning of a man, to the evil ones to forget him.

Below him that night and many such nights was the river, dark and light, and yellow lilies, and his shadow on her breast.

Back of the place where Swananoa worked was Tarrho's lodge, set in a ravine which shallowed to the river from a cliff. From the cliff-top linn and maple looked at the sky, white-flaked sycamores leaned toward the river, and

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berryvines crawled down the cliffside and covered the great round mouth of a Mystery.

The visible breath of the Mystery was there, for the thing breathed with unhuman frequency, twice a year; and its breath lay on the air in banded mists, and fell sometimes in fine noiseless rain which glided back into darkness.

A hollow from the great mouth was a passway under roots of trees, a passway black and bathung, a long darkness coiled like a snake, or winding down, down; tangling with other coils winding down, down. It was dark as a wood where never a moon shines nor a star; where living things were eyeless because of marvelous blackness. Its noiseless waters slunk along walls, gathered in pools no bigger than saucers, was held in gulfs which would hide away tribes forever—pools and gulfs which held no sparkle; and thru them glided ghost-white fishes. It was so still that Tarrho had heard the boom of blood in his brain, yet he had found Talking Water which knew a secret of music no Indian knew. It had gardens where blossoms were enchanted to white stones; places so black that an hour of solitude would have meant madness; a blackness which had sent Tarrho up from the garden of stones, up from the tangle, up, up, and out of the

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mouth of the Mystery which mercifully released him to the day. The Mystery was Mammoth Cave.

Only Tarrho was brave enough to go far into its darkness, and he went thinking of Little Corn Tassel, and counselling with himself.

There was dear-work for Swananoa. It was to soften skins. It was to drill rainbow scales of fishes with a pointed bone, to sew them upon the skirt and and about the neck of a scant skin shirt. It was to make a head-band of coarse, dingy, shells from Green River after she had rubbed them down on rough stones to the salmon and pink and pearl-white layers. It was to string a necklace of claws of baby-bears, and feathers from jibing quarreling paroquets and bluejays, and the skin of a short snake, and twisted shells, pink and wrinkled like morning-glories when morning is going from the day and the blossoms are tucking up their glory forever.

To be sure, no garmentry was too good for Corn Tassel, tho he had more pleasure in a dry gourd or seed-bean-pod which rattled, than in all his finery; but it made him as gay as the spike of a wildflower, and it rejoiced the heart of Swananoa.

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In the talk of squaws working on wampum as they visited Swananoa, Corn Tassel heard the worth of a man-pappoose.

"Swananoa has given five children to the gods of the dead. Tarrho counts one, the man-pappoose."

"Tass has put away two with the gods. No man-pappoose. Tass is worthless to her band. She is worthless to her man."

Old Margra's face was black and rutted like a stump which fire has charred.

"Margra has brought the man-child many times. The gods have taken her woman-child, and this is well. The woman bears and fetches, and is beaten by the way. The man throws meat to dogs, and the woman waits. Shawn did not count our woman-child. Well that she died. Her soul was nothing. Nothing to Shawn was it that her soul should hunger. Margra, mother, put the cloth in her little hands."

Swananoa took up the cry. "Five times I put the cloth in their little hands, Tarrho counts one."

"In my little child's hand I put the cloth," crooned Tass.

All the mothers crooned or moaned behind the boy's back, one making a thought and the others

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taking it for her own, till they chanted one song as if one mother:

I put the cloth in her little hand,
I put the cloth in her little hand,
I did.
It was wet with milk,
It *is* wet with milk—
The cloth in her little hand.
If she should cry it is there.

Little Corn Tassel could not speak his thoughts, but he must have had many, for he heard other strange things told behind his back, tales which braves, beast-hunters and man-slayers, told when they idled and gamed, between hunting and fishing, by Tarrho's lodge. He heard what every man has heard,

A Tale of the Making of Men.

In the beginning men were made in caves low in the earth, low in the dark. They were not happy. The Sun sent his son and daughter low under the earth to comfort men. The children of the Sun cut a way to a place which was high, and to another place which was higher. They led men to the rainbow and left them. The rain-

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bow gave men fire, and the fire comforted them.

In the talk of fishers coming to Green River for fish which had never known tainted water, Corn Tassel heard:

The Legend of Itasca.

Toward the country which is white because it is frozen, but not quite there, Itasca lived in the lodge of her father, the Good Spirit. Her name was Itasca, that is Evening Light. She was named from her beauty, the beauty of light when it shines at the last of day on leaves and grass if it is summer, on stalks and snow if it is winter, or on the pines which think of the sun.

The Evil One lived near. He was the master of the souls of the dead, the Shadows. He kept them in his lodge. He wanted Itasca to live with him and make a pleasant light among the Shadows; but she wished to stay with her father, under pines which thought of the Sun.

The Evil One was angry for that. He called strong spirits, Thunder and Winds. Thunder came rumbling in with his sons, the Lightnings. West Wind brought rain; North Wind an icy breath. The four winds trembled and moaned because they did not wish to obey; but the Winds

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are thoughtful. They thought that when they were dead and shadows they would be in the power of The Evil One in his gloomy lodge. For their souls' sake they obeyed. They entered the lodge of The Good Spirit and turned their faces toward their homes. Each Wind breathed against the wall across his way home. The compelled Winds breathed away the lodge of The Good Spirit. They spoiled the house of Itasca and the land around it, but Itasca would not go with The Evil One.

She had not become a Shadow, and The Evil One had no right to her; but he seized her and threw her down and cast earth over her.

She is in a mound of earth weeping. Her tears trickle thru the mound and creep across the land which the unwilling Winds spoiled. Corn and flowers rise to meet them, and the thoughtful Winds go back and wave the flowers and swing the tassels of the corn. The tears gather in a hollow. They flow out. The tears of Itasca flow from that hollow. They mingle with the beginning of the Mississippi, the Father of Waters.

The boy heard messages the scribes were painting in pictures on a buffalo hide stretched in bushes behind his back, and the strokes of the

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amulet-worker and of the weapon-maker busy in the dry run from the river to Mammoth Cave. He heard the speech of wampum, that it might mean love or hate, promise or payment, the chief's ransom or the tribe's tribute: he heard that it meant the call to the Great Fight: he heard that the war-wampum had come. He heard the spirits of things, the spirits of beasts, of leaves, of dark, of light,—invisibles about a man or the beginning of a man anywhere, forever.

The clinking of the amulet-worker and of the weapon-maker was still. Their work was done. Life went hurriedly behind the boy, for hostile tribes were close, war-paint was on, war-hatchets were out, and the braves were wild for fighting.

"Come," Tarrho said to the boy's mother.

Swananoa bound Little Corn Tassel to her back in the wicker-case, snatched Tarrho's plaited shoes and a deer-skin bag filled with parched corn, and followed Tarrho.

Rain had fallen, and berryvines and water sheeted the mouth of Mammoth Cave. Tarrho led Swananoa around and behind the vines and falling water into cool, black air. He bent her to a seat water-grooved in a wall of rock.

"Sit and wait. War wampum has come for

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the Great Fight. See that the boy is safe when I come from victory."

Swananoa was used to hunger and cold, used to being alone and brave. She would have been hungry but for the corn, lonely but for the boy, and brave but for Tarrho's long delay and awe of blackness and of things which slip thru the coils of blackness. She could not see stones which would glisten in the wall across if there was light. She could not see Corn Tassel.

Darktime ran gaily for the boy. He was happy, for duty-work had become dear-work for Swananoa. He was unlaced from the wicker case, his face, his hands, were laid in a bosom. He said it was "Goo ah Goo!" When he slept, his lips left the bosom, but his hands there were not quiet.

Swananoa did not sleep, for something was with her in the darkness, something not the child. She knew nothing of the talking water: its voices were the voices of beings greater than human. She wailed in anguish, and the anguished wail of a woman answered from the dark. She called to the other squaw. "Is *your* brave coming for you?"

Not one, many squaws, rolled it off and hurled it back: "Is *your* brave coming for you?"

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It went and came till it came from the black coil a hollow moaning whisper and wandered from her ear.

"Tarrho!" she shrieked, and the dark shrieked with her for Tarrho, and afterward moaned and whispered for Tarrho.

Sometime she began to see the high part of the wall across the hollow. Shadows, she thought them clouds, rolled and fled, and bright stones, she thought them stars, twinkled between the rolling clouds; and a red star came, moving in smoke till it shone the blaze of a torch lighted above a man tall from victory.

Swananoa followed her brave, forgetting the small bag and Tarrho's curious shoes and the wicker case, leaving them behind for palefaces who were to come in a hundred years, and taking only Corn Tassel himself.

She might have fallen on stones, or into Bottomless Pit, but she did neither. She followed Tarrho past the Giant's Coffin, and he pushed aside the foam-ruffled curtain of berryvines over the mouth of Mammoth Cave. After the cool air in the earth she felt air the sun shone thru.

She could not see dark and light, she could see only dark. Above the arch flapping birds hurried to canebrake and wood, battle-ranges of

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dark and bloody ground—not far. Swananoa's eyes carried blackness thru open light to a sky where blue could be no bluer.

She could never tell how black the sun looked and then how yellow when she began to see.

With clearing sight she looked for a sign for Corn Tassel.

The river lay gold and green. Green and amber was the shining of leaves lifted to arch it. Swallows flitted over the river. From the far-blue a man-eagle and his mate eyed the earth. Swananoa hung Corn Tassel in the fair stillness. She began dear-work, little shoes, a swallow on one for the swiftness of freedom, and on one an eagle for its watchfulness. She could not say it, she could only put on the shoes, that she wished to make earthly something of the life, the action, and the freedom of the sky. Corn Tassel said it was "Goo Ah Gool"

Across the river panthers, afraid of small noises, stole crouchingly out of underbrush in the wood; flattened against the bank; and lapped stilly; and, stilly lapping, rolled bright eyes and looked over at the boy; but Green River, the deep river, rustled yellow lilies around his shadow on her breast.

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